

MY STRANGEST CASE.

BY GUY BOOTHBY.

AUTHOR OF "DR. NICKOL," "THE BEASTLY WHITE DEVIL," "FRAUDS AND SCANDALS," &c.

CHAPTER III.

Towards the middle of the morning I was sitting in my office, awaiting the coming of a prominent New York lawyer, with whom I had an appointment, when my clerk entered to inform me that a lady was in the outer office, and desired to see me if I could spare her a few minutes.

"Who is she?" I inquired. "Find out that, and also her business," I said. "Her name is Miss Kitwater," replied the clerk. "She has been waiting for some time, but she declines to state her business to any one but yourself, sir."

"Kitwater?" I said. "Then she is a relation, I suppose, of the blind man who was here yesterday. What on earth can she have to say to me?" "She is a relation, sir," replied the clerk. "She is a relation, sir," replied the clerk. "She is a relation, sir," replied the clerk.

"I was not to be left long in doubt," I said. "The door opened and the young lady herself entered the room. I said, 'young lady, because her age could not at most have been more than one or two-and-twenty. She was tall and the possessor of a graceful figure, while one glance was sufficient to show me that her face was an exceedingly pretty one. (Afterwards I discovered that her eyes were dark brown.) I rose and offered her a chair."

"Good morning, Miss Kitwater," I said. "This is an unexpected visit. Won't you sit down?" "When she had done so I resumed my seat at the table."

"Miss Kitwater," she began, "you are the great detective, I believe?" "I admitted the soft impeachment with as much modesty as I could assume at so short a notice. She certainly was a very pretty girl."

"I have come to talk to you about my uncle," she said. "She stopped as if she did not quite know how to proceed."

"The gentleman who called upon me yesterday, and who has the misfortune to be blind, is your uncle?" I said.

"Yes! He was my father's younger and only brother," she answered. "I have often heard my father speak of him, but I had never seen him myself until he arrived in England a month ago with his companion, Mr. Codd."

"Mr. Fairfax," they have suffered terribly. I have never heard anything so awful as their experiences."

"I can quite believe that," I answered. "Your uncle told me something of their great trouble yesterday. It seems wonderful to me that they should have survived to tell the tale."

"Then he must have told you of Hayle, their supposed friend" (she spoke with superb scorn), "the man who betrayed them and robbed them of what was given them?"

"It was for that purpose that they called upon me," I answered. "They were anxious that I should undertake the search for this man."

"She rested her clasped hands upon the table and looked pleadingly at me."

"And will you do so?" "I am considering the matter," I said, with the first feeling of reluctance I had experienced in the case.

"I have promised to give them my decision this afternoon."

"So they informed me, and that is why I am here," she replied. "Oh, Mr. Fairfax, you don't know how I pity them! Surely if they could find this man his heart would be touched, and he would refund them a portion, at least, of what he took from them, and what is legally theirs."

"I am afraid it is very doubtful whether he will, I said, 'even in the event of his being found. Gentlemen of his description are not conspicuous for their pity, nor, as a rule, will they disgorge unless considerable pressure of an unpleasant description is brought to bear upon them."

"Then that pressure must be brought to bear," she said, "and if I may say so, you are the only one who can do it. That is why I have called upon you this morning. I have come to plead with you, to implore with you, if necessary, to take the matter up. I am not very rich, but I would willingly give all I have in the world to help them."

"In that case you are one niece in a thousand, Miss Kitwater," I said, with a smile. "Your uncle is indeed fortunate in having such a champion."

"She looked at me as if she were not quite certain whether I was joking or not."

"You will do this for them?" "What was I to say? What could I say? I had well nigh decided to have nothing to do with the matter, yet here I was, beginning to think it was hard upon me to have to disappoint her. My profession is not one calculated to render a man's heart over tender, but I must confess that in this case I was by no means as adamant as was usual with me. As I have said, she was an unusually pretty girl, and had she not been kind enough to express her belief in my powers! After all, detectives, like other people, are only human."

"Your uncle and his companion have promised to call upon me this afternoon," I said, "and when they do, I think I may promise you that I will endeavor to come to some arrangement with them."

"I thank you," she said; "for I made that means that you will try to help them. If I am not confident that you will succeed, I hope you will forgive me for having called upon you as I have done, but when I saw how disappointed they were after their interview with you yesterday, I made up my mind that I would endeavor to see you and to interest you on their behalf before they came again."

"You have certainly done so," I answered, as she rose to go. "If I take the case up, and believe me I am not at all sure that I shall not do so, they will owe it to your intervention."

"Oh, no, I did not mean that exactly," she replied, blushing.

protruding. "I should like to feel that you did it for the reason that you believe in the justice of their cause, not merely because I tried to persuade you into it. That would not be fair, either to them or to you."

"Would it not be possible for it to be on account of both reasons?" I asked. "Let us hope so. And now good-morning, Miss Kitwater. I trust your uncle will have good news for you when you see him again this afternoon."

"I hope so too," she answered, and I then with a renewal of her thanks and a little bow she left the office.

I closed the door and went back to my seat, almost wondering at my own behavior. Here was I, a hard-headed man of the world, being drawn into an extraordinary piece of business, which I had most certainly decided to have nothing to do with, simply because a pretty girl had smiled upon me, and had asked me to do it. For I don't mind confessing that I had made up my mind to help Kitwater and Codd in their search for the villain Hayle. The Trust Company would have to look elsewhere for assistance. And yet, as I had the best of reasons for knowing, that piece of business was likely to prove twice as remunerative as this search for the traitorous friend. Happily, however, money is not everything in this world.

During the remainder of the day I found myself looking forward with a feeling that was almost akin to eagerness, to the interview I was to have with Kitwater and Codd that afternoon. If the two gentlemen had faults, unpunctuality was not certainly one of them, for the clock upon my mantelpiece had scarcely finished striking the hour of four, when I heard footsteps in the office outside, and next moment they were shown into my own sanctum. Codd came first, leading his friend by the hand, and as he did so he eyed me with a look of intense anxiety upon his face. Kitwater, on the other hand, was dignified and as impressive as ever. If he were nervous, he certainly concealed it well.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fairfax," he said, as Codd led him to a seat. "According to the arrangement we came to yesterday afternoon, we have come to learn your decision as to whether you will give us at four o'clock to-day. I trust you have good news for us."

"That depends upon how you take it," I answered. "I have made up my mind to help you on certain conditions."

"And those conditions?" "Are that you pay my expenses and the sum of five hundred pounds, to which another five hundred is to be added if I am successful in helping you to recover the treasure of which you told me yesterday. Is that a fair offer?"

"An exceedingly fair one," Kitwater replied, while little Codd nodded his head energetically to show that he appreciated it. We had expected that you would charge more. Of course you understand that it may involve a chase round half the world before you can find him? He's as slippery as an eel, and if he once gets to know that we are after him, he'll double and twist like a hare."

"He'll not be the first man I have had to deal with who possessed these characteristics," answered Codd, who was really succeeded in running them to earth at the end."

"Let's hope for all our sakes that you will be as successful in this case," he said. "And now, if I may ask the question, when will you be ready to begin your search? We shall both feel happier when we know that you are on his track."

"I am ready as soon as you like," I rejoined. "Indeed, the sooner the better for all parties concerned. Nothing is to be gained by delay, and, if, as you say, the man has now been in England two months, he may soon be thinking of getting out of it again, if he has not done so already. But before I embark upon anything, you must first make me quite certain that you are aware that your niece called upon me this morning?"

"A hundred, if you like," he returned. "You have only to ask them, and I will do my best to answer."

"In the first place, I must have a description of this Mr. Gideon Hayle."

"What is he like?" "Tall, thin, with brown hair, and a short, close-cropped beard; he carries himself erect, and looks about thirty."

"You don't happen to have a photograph of him in your possession, I suppose?"

"No," replied Kitwater, shaking his head. Gideon Hayle is not the sort of man to allow himself to be photographed, and, what's more, you must remember that when we reached Nampoung, the action of the iron-clad of Nampoung had scarcely begun to drag upon our backs. Any goods and chattels we might once have possessed were in the hands of the Chinese. They had robbed us of everything, except what that arch-thief, Hayle, had already stolen from us."

"I said this, another look such as I had seen on the occasion of his previous visit spread over his face."

"The robber, the thief," he hissed, almost trembling in his sudden excess of rage; "when I get hold of him he shall rue his treachery to the day of his death. Upwards of a quarter of a million of money he stole from us, and what is he now? Where is my right, and where is Codd's power of speech? All gone, and he is free. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, but I want to repay it myself. I want to—"

Here he leant across the table and turned his sightless eyes upon me.

"This is certainly a curious sort of missionary," I said to myself, as I watched him. He may be smitten on one cheek, but I scarcely fancy he would be content to turn the other to the striker."

At this moment Codd leant forward in his chair, and placed his hand upon his friend's arm. The effect was magical. His fit of impotent rage died down as suddenly as it had sprung up, and immediately he became again the quiet, suave, smooth-spoken individual who had first entered my office.

"I must beg your pardon, Mr. Fairfax," he said, in a totally different voice to that in which he had just spoken. "When I remember how we have been wronged, I am apt to forget myself. I trust you will forgive me."

"I will do so willingly," I answered. "You have certainly won the right to be excused if you entertain a feeling of resentment for the man who has treated you so shamefully. And now, I must return to my own business."

"What was I to say about it?" "I was about to ask you the number and description of the stones of which he robbed you. You told me they numbered ninety-three in all, if I remember right. Can you tell me how many there were of each?"

"Forty-eight rubies and forty-two sapphires," he replied, without a moment's hesitation. "The rubies were uncut and of various sizes, ranging perhaps from ten to eighty carats. They were true rubies, not spinels, remember that. The sapphires ran from fifteen carats to sixty, and there was not a flaw amongst them."

"Has Hayle any knowledge of the value of precious stones?" "There's not a keener judge in the East. He would be a cunning man who would succeed in taking him in about the value of anything from a moonstone to a ruby."

"In that case," I would, in all probability, know where to place them to the best advantage?"

"You may be sure that was his intention in coming to England. But we have tried Hutton-garden and can hear nothing of him there."

"He may have disposed of some of them," I said. "If so, we will soon clear that point up. The size of the larger stones is so unusual that they would be certain to attract attention. And now one other question. Are you aware whether he has any friends or relatives in England?"

"So far as we know he has not a single relative in the world," Kitwater replied. "Have you ever heard of one, Codd?"

"The little man shook his head, and then, taking the other man's hand, tapped upon it with his fingers in the manner I have already described."

"He says Hayle has a sister once, of whom he was very fond." The tapping upon the hand continued, and once more Kitwater translated. "She was a cripple, and lived in a small house off the Brompton-road. She died while Hayle was in North Borneo."

"Is not that so, little man?" I asked. "Codd nodded his head to show that he was in agreement with me. Kitwater had interpreted him correctly. I then made some inquiries as to the missing man's habits. So far the description I had had of him was commonplace in the extreme."

"Do you know whether he shipped on board the *Jemadar* for England under his own name or under an assumed one?"

"He booked his passage as George Bertram," Kitwater replied. "We know that is so, for we made inquiries at Rangoon."

"I next noted the name and address of the vessel's owner, and resolved to pay him a visit next morning."

"He said he had not learned from him anything of the kind," Hayle, and where he had gone on landing."

"I think those are all the questions I want to ask you at present," I said, closing my note-book. "It would be as well perhaps for you to furnish me with your address, in order that I may communicate with you, should it be necessary."

"At present," said Kitwater, "we are staying with my niece at the village of Bishopstove, in Surrey. My late brother was vicar of the parish for many years, and he left his daughter a small property in the neighborhood. They tell me it is a pretty place, but as you are aware, unfortunately, cannot see it. My friend Codd here cannot talk to me about it."

"He heaved a heavy sigh and then rose to depart."

"I must again express my gratitude to you, Mr. Fairfax," he said, "for having consented to take up my case. I feel certain you will ultimately be successful. I will leave you to imagine with what anxiety we shall await any news you may have to give us."

"I will communicate with you as soon as I have anything to report," I answered. "You may rely upon my doing my best to serve you. By the way, are you aware that your niece called upon me this morning?"

"He gave a start of surprise."

"No, I certainly did not know it," he replied. "She said nothing to us of such an intention. I know that she is heart and soul with us in our desire to find Hayle. But since you have seen her, you probably know that."

"I think I do," I returned, for some reason almost abruptly.

"She is a good girl," said Kitwater, and then took from his pocket an envelope which he handed to me.

"By the way, I brought this with me," he said. "It is a letter from your niece, and it should be able to induce you to accede to our wishes. Inside you will find a hundred-pound note, which should be sufficient to cover any preliminary expenses. If you need more, perhaps you will be kind enough to communicate with me at once, and it shall be sent you. A receipt can be forwarded to me at your own address."

I thanked him and placed the envelope upon the table. In my own mind I felt sure that it would be an easy matter to guess whence the sum had come, and for a reason that I could not then analyze, and therefore am unable to describe, the thought irritated me."

Having assured them that the amount would be quite sufficient, in the event of nothing unforeseen happening, to last for some considerable time to come, I conducted them to the door, again repeating the promise that I would communicate with them as soon as I had anything to report. If I had only known then that the very next morning they were to be in the street, when they wanted me to find for them, and whom they hated so desperately, was standing in a shop on the other side of the road, keeping an eye on my door, and evidently watching for their departure, how much trouble and vexation of spirit we should have had to endure! But I did not know this until long afterwards, and then, of course, the information came too late to be of any service to us."

Next morning I was early at the office, being desirous of winding up another little matter before I turned my attention to the new affair. One of my subordinates had just returned from the Continent, whither I had sent him to keep an eye on a certain pseudo-French Marquis with whom I expected to have dealings at no distant date. He reported that the gentleman in question had broken the bank at Monte Carlo, had stolen and lost all his winnings next day, and had shot himself on the promenade on the evening following. With his death the affair, on which I had con-

idently expected to be employed, came to an end. I could not say that I was altogether sorry.

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it it would be of any use to you. I could send you a most trustworthy subordinate; one who would be quite capable of undertaking the work, and who would give you every satisfaction."

"I fear that would not be the same thing," he said. "My firm have such implicit faith in you that they would not entertain the idea of anyone else going. Now think, Mr. Fairfax, for a moment. If you think of me as your man, on behalf of my Company, am prepared to offer you your expenses and a sum of five thousand pounds. You need not be away more than three months at longest, so that you see our offer at the rate of twenty thousand pounds a year. It is princely remuneration."

I looked at him closely. It was plain that he was in earnest—in deadly earnest, so it seemed. Even a defaulting manager would scarcely seem to warrant so much zeal.

"I am much flattered by your offer," I said; "and, believe me, I most truly appreciate the generosity of your Company; but, as I said before, if it is necessary for me to go at once—that is to say, before I have completed my present case—then I have no option but to most reluctantly decline it."

"Perhaps you will think it over," he continued. "And let me know, say to-morrow."

"No amount of thinking it over will induce me to alter my decision," I replied. "You must see for yourself that I have no right to accept a retainer from one party and then throw it over in order to favour another. That would not only be dishonourable action on my part, but would be bad from a business point of view. No, Mr. Bayle, I am exceedingly sorry, but I have no option but to act as I am doing."

In that case, I must wish you a very good morning," he remarked, and took up his hat and umbrella. I could see, however, that he was still reluctant to go.

"Good-morning," I answered. "I hope your affairs in the Argentine may brighten before very long."

He shook his head gloomily, and then left the office without another word.

When he had gone I answered some letters, gave some instructions to my managing clerk, and then donned my hat and set off for the office of the Shipping Company that had brought Gideon Hayle to England.

Unfortunately it transpired that they were not in position to give me much in the way of helping me. Mr. Bertram had certainly travelled home in one of their steamers, so the manager informed me, a boat that as a rule did not carry passengers. He had landed at the docks, and from that moment they had neither seen nor heard anything of him. I inquired for the steamer, only to learn that she was now somewhere on her way between Singapore and Hong Kong. This was decidedly disappointing, but as most of the cases in which I have been ultimately successful have had unpromising beginnings, I did not take it too seriously. I was leaving the Shipping Office, I next turned my attention to Hutton-garden, where I called upon Messrs. Jacob and Bulenthall, one of the largest firms in the gem trade. We had had many dealings together in the past, and, as I had had the good fortune to come to the notice of the signal service, I knew that they would now do all that they could for me in return.

"Good-day, Mr. Fairfax," said the chief partner, as I entered his snug little sanctum, which leads out of the main office. "Have the pleasure of doing for you."

"I am in search of some information," I replied. "And I think you may be able to help me."

"I will do all that is in my power to render you assistance," he returned, as he wiped his glasses and placed them on his somewhat fleshy nose. "What is the information you require?"

"There have been another robbery of rubies and sapphires of great value. I know that they would now do all that they could for me in return."

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On Sunday afternoon the first of annual Christmas carol service.

This has been a record shipbuilding year. The British tonnage launched in this year exceeds in extent, value and value any previous year in the history of shipbuilding. Every one of the north-eastern ports show an increase over last year, and together they head the list with 950,000 tons. The Clyde district tonnage was 530,000 tons. Other ports being on the grand total.

The protection and preservation of the Thames fishery between Isleworth and Staines (vested in the Corporation of London) was first undertaken by a number of gentlemen in 1838, who formed the Thames Angling Preservation Society, and it has since worked entirely voluntary and with the exception of the late Mr. W. Brougham, none of its officers excepted, have ever accepted any payment. Mr. H. L. W. Lawson, J. C. H. W. Higgins, hon. sec. and hon. treasurer, and the 17 miles of water it looks after as well or better stocked than any similar stretch of water in the country.

Other societies established later, in 1860, after other portions of the Thames—Windsor, Maidenhead, Reading, & Henley, and a society at Abingdon—found their funds expended by the

The production at the Avenue of piece founded on "Gulliver's Travels" has drawn attention to the

Mr. Munning, a cycle manufacturer of some 25 years' standing, has been writing to the Press a very sensible letter upon the subject of "featherweight" cycles. He points out that it is not sufficient in order to make a light bicycle that a few pounds should be taken off an old type machine by reducing the weight of the frame.

He maintains, and he is in common sense on his side, that to lightenness with reliability requires an entirely redesigning of the machine with this idea always in the designer's mind, and that only when this is done will featherweight cycles be popular and reliable.

Our illustration shows a pretty design for a "Shepherdess" costume to be worn at the fancy dress ball. The full skirt should be made of pale blue or pink nuncheon veiling, whilst the overdress, which is bunched up on the hips and secured by a cord, is made of fancy cotton or cambric. The bodice is also made of the fancy cotton, and with it worn a white muslin fichu turned in at the neck. The sleeves are full and short and the skirt is



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CURE BILIOUS and NERVOUS DISORDERS, CONSTIPATION, SICK HEADACHE, INDIGESTION, DYSPEPSIA, and all STOMACHIC TROUBLES.

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REMOVE WIND and PAINS in the
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BEECHAM'S PILLS
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ARE ESPECIALLY SUITABLE FOR THE
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REGULATE THE SYSTEM.
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RECOMMEND THEMSELVES.
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have half an ox-head (or, as it is sometimes called, an ox-cheek) and a cow-hell, with one or two unions, four or five cloves, three carrots, two turnips and two onions, all cut in small pieces. Add a bunch of celery, a bunch of heads of celery, a blade or two of mace, a fagot of mixed savory herbs tied in a piece of muslin, one bay leaf, a teaspoonful of salt, and half a teaspoonful of pepper. Wash the cow-hell and cut it in two, so that it will contain the other ingredients. Pour in cold water so that it will reach at least six or seven inches before you begin to cook it; also thoroughly cleanse the cow-hell. Put these ingredients in the cow-hell, and pour over your soup pot with the other ingredients, reserving half of the celery and

a chapel about nine miles from Taunton on Friday, and did not return until 11 p.m., when he was apparently in his usual excellent health. Deceased was an old student of Spurgeon's Pastors' College, and was about 50.

DON'T STEER— Dr. Mackenzie's Catarrh Cure—Something notable in curing Believers and Cured God in the Head, Indigestion, Nervous Headache, Painful Urine, etc. Dr. All Chemists and Grocers. Price 1s. or 2s. per bottle. Post free 4s. Mackenzie's Cure Drops. Reading. Refuse worthless imitations. —(Advt.)

TOBACCONIST'S COMMERCIAL. See 133, Guide (100) page 1, 3d. How to open a cigar store. £25 to £500, per doz. Dr. All Chemists and Grocers. 1895, Eastford, Dorset. Established 1868. —(Advt.)

STOCK MARKET.
CITY, Saturday.
Consols unchanged. Foreign Government Securities good in tone. Home Rails firm. Americans advance.

THE SOUTHERN OFFICER.

At the inquest on Lieut. B. S. Winter, R.N., of guardship Empress of India, stationed at Queenstown, who was found dead in bed at the Imperial Hotel, Cork, death was shown to have been due to an overdose of laudanum.

If you feel "muzzy" or "out of nerve," a teaspoonful of Abbey's Balm is a half-tumbler of water will put you right at once.

Sore Throat	All all Season.
Croup	All all Climates.
Rheumatism	All all Seasons.
Nervous Headache	All all Times.

Abbey's Balm should be taken daily the most round. All Chemists & Druggists sell it.

THE MOST TALKING THING YOU CAN SUFFER FROM IS
 CRACK HEADS OF THE B.I.A. Whigston's Pills will
 make your tongue like a charm. Of all ailments...
 Crack cocaine, First-st. B.I.A. 4 stamps. (L.A.S.)

20 ground, also Bailey v. Lough.
 21 1. LANCASHIRE COMPETITION.
 72 Birkenhead, 10 points; Stockport, 3 points.
 8. The following matches were not played:—
 22 Litherham v. Morecambe; Wigan v. St. Elms;
 23 Millom v. Radcliffe; Rochdale
 24 v. Salford.
 25 2. YORKSHIRE COMPETITION.
 26 Dewsbury, 6 points; Wakefield, 5 points.
 27 Sowerby Bridge, 1 goal 1 try; Liversedge,
 28 try.
 29 Normanton, 1 goal 2 tries; Bramley, 1 goal
 30 try.
 31 The following matches were postponed on
 32 account of the state of the ground.—York v.
 33 Wakefield; Heckmondwike v. Castleford; Keigh-
 34 ley v. Manningham.

GEORGE-STREET, HOTEL



THE VOLUNTEERS

Last evening, at the Schools of the War Company of Grocers, at Clapton, the p
n last season by the members of the
y of London Buses for shooting drill

Chicago, N. H., 1894.
Do. Prof., 230.
Milwaukee Ord., 1893.
Do. Prof., —.
Chicago, Hook L., 1894.
Cleveland, C. O., and
St. Louis, 98.
S. W. —.

Fullback, and
Southern Rail.
Do. Prof., 93.
Union Pacific.
Wabash, St. L.,
Pacific C. O.,
W. Coast, St. L.,
Atlantic Prob.

A boy named Cheesum was
day shot in the head while
pheasants to Mr. Jas. Bailey
and his party, on the Shortgate,
Newport, Essex.

"THE PEOPLE" MIXTURE.

The death-rate for the 33 great towns of England and Wales increased last year from 15.5 to 16.3. Portsmouth was lowest with 11.3, followed by Craydon with 15.1; while at the other extreme Gateshead was up to 22.2, and Oldham to the very high level of 32.6.

In London the increase was only slight, from 18.5 to 18.7, the 1,628 deaths from all causes being 136 less than the corrected average.

Small-pox was the cause of 24 deaths, while there were 65 fatal cases of measles, the highest number of any one week during the past 18 months.

A man is generally at his heaviest in his 40th year.

More people have died from cold than from any other cause in battle.

There is one titled person to every hundred commoners in Russia.

Hints on etiquette will be found in "The People" Almanack for 1902, particulars of which appear on page 6.

To be perfectly proportioned, a man should weigh 25lb. for every foot of his height.

Some insects, while in the larva state, never sleep, but eat all the time.

The largest cast bronze statue in the world is that of Peter the Great at St. Petersburg. It weighs 1,100,000 lbs.

Only 60,331 of the 700,000 British subjects died last year had any cause to leave by will.

There are 23,000 large houses in the Kingdom, and the furniture of these is valued at £5,900 for each house.

A shipyard at Omimoto, Japan, still in operation, was established 1,900 years ago.

There are 130,000,000 people on the face of the globe who don't know what soap is.

The ordinary rate of the Thames current is 180 feet a minute; that of the Rhine, 540 feet.

It is the belief of some of the Chinese that the women who wear short hair will be transformed into men in the next world.

During the last 30 years of the 19th century India received and retained 850 millions sterling worth of gold and silver coin.

The world's ships carry 180 million tons of merchandise a year, and of this one quarter by weight is coal, and one tenth wheat.

Pilissol's mark showing the load-line on ships is a circular disc a foot in diameter, with a line 18in. long drawn through its centre.

The present Pole star is the one called Alpha, in the constellation Ursa Minor. It has been the world's Pole star for nearly 2,000 years.

The oak is the heaviest of British timbers. Next comes beech, then ash, apple, maple, cherry, walnut, and pear. Poplar is lightest of all.

A juvenile fancy dress party will be given by Mr. H. R. Johnson at Holborn Town Hall on Tuesday. This will be followed by a dance for adults.

A list of London theatres and musicals, together with plants and a mass of useful information, will be found in "The People" Almanack for 1902, particulars of which appear on p. 8.

Plate-powder is usually made of rouge and prepared chalk. Plate-powder containing mercury puts a splendid polish on silver, but is very dangerous.

The lightship in Downs, off Deal, will be removed on Wednesday. The wreck of the liner Patria having been blown up, there is now no danger to deep draught ships.

While cleaning a window at Stockton a married woman named Mary Smith slipped and fell on the railings underneath she was impaled on three of the prongs, and died from the terrible injuries she received.

At some hotels in Sweden a man and wife are charged as one and a half persons when they occupy the same room. A husband and wife may travel as one and a half persons by rail.

In January, 1901, France recorded 967 accidents with horses, of which 69 were fatal. In the same period of time, railways killed eight persons only, bicycles six, while automobiles were responsible for two deaths only.

Colorado and Iowa have both restored the death penalty for murder. There are now only four States of America in which the death penalty is not inflicted—Wisconsin, Michigan, Maine, and Rhode Island.

The Marie Rickmers is the largest sailing ship built in a British port. Over four miles of steel are used in her rigging, and six miles of running cordage. The combined height of her masts is 960ft.

A Collier named Thomas Vernon was found frozen to death at Andley by his brother-in-law. Deceased's home was situated in a lonely spot, and at one of the highest points in Staffordshire. Vernon's body was found within 200 yards of the house.

A Frenchman named Paul Goddard was charged at Bow-st., upon a provisional warrant, with forging a letter, written in Paris, a bill of exchange for 20,000 francs. Prisoner was arrested in Southampton-row and remanded.

In connection with the petition for the release of the American, Miss Eastwick, who was sentenced to a term of imprisonment recently, it is understood that the Home Secretary has intimated that he can take no action.

The scabbard worn by Russian officers are made of papier-maché.

A bee will carry twice its weight in honey or wax.

Only 54 in every 100,000 deaths are really due to old age.

Local time, not Greenwich time, is the time for lighting up.

The human family is subject to 45 principal Governments.

In our workhouses there are about 40,000 ill and bedridden paupers.

Whitechapel holds London's record for population—225 to the acre.

The Albert Memorial, in Hyde Park, is 135ft. high, and cost £120,000.

The United Kingdom has 16 leading art societies, of which eight are Royal.

The largest wrought-iron pillar is at Delhi, in India. It is 60ft. high and weighs 17 tons.

A paper chimney, 50ft. high and fire-proof, is one of the curiosities of Breslau, Germany.

It is estimated that about £2,000,000 worth of German toys are annually sold in this country.

Four thousand nine hundred and sixty-eight of the population of Britain were born at sea.

The poor-rate was first established in the year 1573, under Queen Elizabeth.

Eleven sorts of spaniels are recognised as different breeds by the Kennel Club.

70,000 tons of cork are used yearly for bottling beer and mineral waters in this country.

The night population of the City of London is falling off at the rate of about 1000 a year.

In 1858 there were 3,850 engineers and stokers in the British Navy. There are now nearly 23,000.

The Royal Academy has 40 Academicians, five retired honorary Academicians, and 25 Associates.

Rosewood is not the wood of any species of rose-tree, nor is it red. Its fragrance gives it its name.

The longest European mile is the Swedish, equalling 7,021 of our miles. The Hanoverian comes next.

Over 3,000 people take records of rainfall in Great Britain and Ireland. Of these observers 2,545 are English.

The average Englishman of 20 may live 39 to 40 years, the Irish 37 to 38, and 15th years more than this.

The cost of Queen Victoria's Coronation was £69,401 1s. 10d.; that of William IV. was £43,159 11s. 5d.; that of George IV. £243,888 6s. 3d.

Good mortar should only contain one-third lime. Mortar with one-sixth only of lime is not safe for use in building.

The Caspian Sea has but 11lb. of salt to a ton of water; while there are 81lb. in a ton of ordinary Atlantic water.

A Nuremberg merchant has invented a new kind of boot, with an apparatus in the heel, by means of which the whole foot can be warmed.

The United States has now the third largest Hebrew population in any country in the world. One in every 70 is a Jew.

In the year 1750 the Lord Mayor of London died of gall fever caught during the assizes at Newgate. Gall fever was a form of typhus.

Women were first employed in the British Post Office in 1870. There are now about 105,000 postmistresses and clerks.

As far as money spent on it goes, the United States Navy comes next to ours. It is worth 154 millions, to our 274 millions.

The excess of goods traffic receipts over those from passengers' tickets amounted last year to £16,334,222 on British railways.

At Auchtermuchty, in Scotland, is a vine bigger than that at Hampton Court. It produced three years ago 4,000 bunches of grapes.

While in Europe only 10 in each 1,000 people are living out of their country, in America 137 out of every 1,000 were not born on that continent.

Are you interested in meteorology? Some interesting notes will be found in "The People" Almanack for 1902, copies of which are now on sale; price free, 1s. 4d.

In a village in the Cotswolds it is the custom to place a small mirror on the front door to the knocker, in which the visitor may examine his appearance before entering.

Pennegranite is used to tan the finest Morocco leather.

Cancer accounts for 302 deaths in every 10,000 in this country.

Provisions were first tinned by Appert in Paris in the year 1810.

Japan's average rainfall is 145 inches—five times that of England.

The Dog of Allen, the biggest in Ireland, is in places 47 feet deep.

Britain's 60,000 postmen deliver yearly 3,600 million postal packets.

London consumes 11 tons of salt a day.

Camels are the only animals that cannot swim.

Mails were first sent by railway in 1830 between Liverpool and Manchester.

There are 17 packs of stagbushes in England, containing 422 couples of hounds.

Abysinia's trade in gold and ivory is mainly in the hands of the Emperor Menelik.

Coal is worked so easily in China that in Shanghai it sells at less than 10p. per ton at the mine.

Of all the newspapers published in the world 68 per cent. are in the English language.

In 1874 and 1875 Income-tax was reduced to 2d. in the pound, its lowest point.

The Monte Carlo gambling casino made £900,000 last year, of which £500,000 was clear profit.

Heavily silver pennies were minted with a deep cross, and when change was wanted they were broken up into halfpennies and farthings.

Switzerland enjoys the unenviable distinction of having a larger percentage of lunatics than any other country.

In 1620 the Island of Manhattan, on New York City is built, sold for £24.16s. Recently 25 acres of the same land sold for £250,000.

A French conscript has been excused from three years' service because of ugliness. It was held that his appearance would make his comrades laugh, and thus interfere with discipline.

London's capital of seven millions sterling accommodates 8,400 guests a night during the season, and employ 4,500 servants.

The ocean used to be considered about as deep as its deepest at the highest mountains are high. It has now been proved to be half as deep again—that is 46,260ft.

On River Thames, at Greenwich Hospital, stands the only statue to a French officer near London. It is that of Lieut. Bellot, who lost his life in search for Franklin.

The population of the province of Quebec is growing at the rate of 3 per cent. in every 10 years; while that of Ontario is increasing only 2½ per cent. in the same time.

A ton of lead is fired for every man killed in battle. Statistics of European wars show that from 3,000 to 10,000 shots are fired for every person disabled.

The tail feathers of the frigate, a rare member of the bird of paradise family, are the most expensive in the world, and the only one existing in England is valued at £10,000.

It is computed that as many as 1,500 Jews have fought on the British side during the Boer war, and there are on record 10 several instances of three Jewish brothers being on service with British regiments in South Africa.

The great bridge in course of construction across the Valley of Paderne, in Luxembourg, when finished will surpass Cahir John Bridge, now the longest single span of masonry in the world.

There are in the Bible 3,566,480 letters. Our national debt bill last year amounted to £160,891,718. This would allow us to place on each letter in the Bible 245 2s. 2½d., and leave over £2,000 to boot.

In the opinion of leading seamen that London consumes no fewer than 15,000,000 fowls a year, which, if evenly divided among the population, would allow about three per head per annum.

In Turkish every wedding engagement begins with the payment of a substantial cash bribe to the girl's parents. If the girl likes her lover, the engagement gift has to be returned, unless the parents have another daughter to give as a substitute.

Debtors in Siam, when three months in arrears, can be seized by the creditor and compelled to work out their indebtedness. Should a debtor run away, his wife, his wife, or his wife, can be held in slavery until the debt is cancelled.

The insignia of royalty used at the Coronation of the Sovereign will, next year, have special interest, owing to the crowning of King Edward VII. Some interesting details will be found in "The People" Almanack for 1902, particulars of which will be found on page 8.

The King Baron predicted in 1773 that flying would "shortly" become a general practice; and Bishop Wilkins, Cromwell's brother-in-law, said: "It will yet be as usual to hear a man call for his wings when he is going on a journey as it is now to hear him call for his boots."

The new Indianapolis Telephone Company has arranged to give its long-distance operators lessons in elocution at the expense of the company, in order to improve their enunciation. The company officials say that its long-distance patronage demands this in order to make the service better.

A remarkable innovation is about to be made in Paris. The policemen on night duty are to have electric lights on various parts of their uniforms and at the extremities of their batons. These will be worked by pressing a waistcoat button, and the object is the regulation of the street traffic.

The only woman hipster in the world is Mrs. Cora G. Kimball, Philadelphia. No ladder is too high for her, and when at work she wears a short skirt, high boots, and a felt hat. Her work is giving the fullest satisfaction, as she is prompt and reliable, and she is absorbing a good share of the business of the place.

The first tubular lifeboat was built at Weymouth in 1832.

Sprats are our cheapest fish, being worth only 24 2½d. a ton.

It is a remarkable fact that few savages have ever been known to slay.

The first five-engine used in America was taken from England to New York in 1731.

About 450 tons of gold are yearly dug by man in various parts of the earth.

Yorkshire ironstone is the richest in England. It averages in value 10s. a ton.

The 163 foxhound packs in England and Wales contain 6,172 couples of hounds.

Of 35 warships built last year in Britain 18 only were for the British Government.

For every 100 people who live in the country the United Kingdom 258 live in towns.

In London, 121 per 1,000 of the deaths are from consumption; in Paris 170, and in Vienna 252.

Men's wages in British factories average 25s. a week, against 16s. in Spain, and 15s. in Italy.

Cuba imported 116,000 Chinese coolies 30 years ago. Within five years 67,000 of them were dead.

The national debt of Ireland, 150 millions, was consolidated with that of England in the year 1817.

The amount of coal raised yearly in Britain does the work of 100,000,000 people, working continuously.

For every cent of all criminals sentenced in this country last year were imprisoned for seven days or less.

If an offender sentenced to be flogged is under 14, not more than 12 strokes may be inflicted.

487 omnibuses have been counted in one hour passing the junction between Oxford-st. and Tottenham Court-road.

The largest enclosure for deer is the Royal Park at Copenhagen, 4,200 acres.

The most expensive street to rebuild during the last century was the Rue de Rivoli, in Paris. It cost £2,860,000.

British revenue was lowest in the reign of Edward IV. It amounted to about a shilling a head in the year 1480.

About 350 Acts of Parliament were passed every year during the last century. Of these little over one-third were Public Acts.

In 1875 152 steam and 317 sailing vessels were built in the United Kingdom; last year 423 steam vessels and 23 sailing ships.

France, with her Colonies, covers 8,545,000 square miles; just 200,000 square miles more than the territory of the United States.

Shorncliffe first became a military camp during the Peninsular War. Since the Crimean War it has had a permanent garrison of 5,000 men.

Shad is known by Scotch fishermen as king of the herrings. British shad weigh sometimes as much as 8lb.

The largest are caught in the Severn. A working man would need 8½lb of white of eggs as a full day's food; but if allowed the whole egg, could live on 2½lb.

England's first co-operative society was established in 1844, at Rochdale, Lancashire, by 28 workmen, with a capital of £28.

Alaska has 10,000 square miles capable of cultivation, and the probabilities of successful farming there are receiving strict attention of late.

Australia now breeds considerably over double as many sheep as the United States, the numbers being 1,001 millions to 391 millions.

Shagreen, now made from the skins of sharks and rays, was a name originally applied to a substance made from the hides of horses and asses.

In Germany, all workmen, servants, and clerks above 16, and getting less than £100 a year, are obliged by law to insure against old age.

It is the opinion of Mr. W. Barrup, aged 81, at Brighton. He was Common Councilor for the Cornhill Ward, and for many years secretary of Surrey Cricket Club.

In 1890-91, six million tons of fish, valued at £4,300,000, were landed on British coasts. In 1890-91 8,600,000 tons were landed, and sold for £260,000,000.

The most dangerous waters in the world for the passage of ships lie off the east coast of England, Cape Ushant in France, and Cape Finisterre in Spain.

In order to protect the inscriptions in the ancient temples and tombs from the ravages of torches and lamps the Egyptian Government purposes to install electricity.

Pineapples come into bearing in Hawaii when the plants are four months old, and bear in abundance for years. Lettuce and celery can be planted at any time, and in this favoured climate they develop quickly.

England and Wales have 62 towns of over 50,000 people.

"Shilling's" shortest night is five hours, but her longest is over 18 hours.

The first shell was used in warfare by the Sultan of Gujarat, India, in 1540.

No less than 1,132 different species of seaweeds are found on the Australian coast.

Scotland has 787 islands round its coast, but only 62 exceed three square miles in area.

Without machinery one man can cultivate 12 acres of cotton. With machinery, 30 acres.

There are usually over 7,000 children in British reformatories, and 20,000 in industrial schools.

London's ratable value is over 36 millions, and the cost of its government is almost 13 millions a year.

Twenty British landowners possess over 150,000 acres apiece. Of these 15 are peers and five commoners.

Four Scottish towns—Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen—have each populations exceeding 100,000.

A young man, who fell into a tank of boiling water at the Hotel Belgravia, was severely burned and had to be detained in St. Thomas' Hospital.

Chas. Peacock, nightman at the Empire Theatre, Southend, fell from the roof of the building into the sea, a distance of 60 feet. Killed instantly.

Col. Elliott, R.E., advises Volunteers to train by hunting each other in their own country as the Boers hunt big game.

At a cost of £20,000 per ship four vessels of the German Navy of the Brandenburg type are to have their fighting effectiveness increased.

The Rev. Dr. Guinness Rogers, who will be 80 to-day, intends to celebrate his birthday by preaching twice from his pulpit at Clapham.

The Sultan of Morocco is reported to be in disagreement with the French Boundary Commissioners regarding the Algerian frontier.

The death has occurred at Taunton of Dr. H. J. Penny at the advanced age of nearly 80. He was at one time a prominent Army surgeon.

Twenty-one years' service as foreign secretary of the London Municipality will be completed by the Rev. R. Wardlaw Thompson on Wednesday.

Hygiene has been included in the course of studies pursued at West Point Military Academy, where so many of the officers of the U.S. army are trained.

Sawdust mixed with chemicals under the skilled alchemy of a German has been turned into a flooring as hard as marble, and yet warm and elastic to the tread.

Although quite blind, Ald. E. Jones has, for the second time in 10 years, been elected chairman of the sanitary committee of the Swindon Town Council.

A number of political and literary societies in Paris have organized a great publicity drive with a view to forming a hypothetical academy of women.

The first woman elected will be Queen Wilhelmina of Holland.

Gen. Wynne, commanding the troops in Cape Colony, will succeed Sir Archibald Hunter in the command of the First Class District in India, which the latter held before going to South Africa.

King Alexander of Serbia has informed his uncle, Col. Constantinovitch, who was banished for making slighting remarks about Queen Draga, that he may return if he humbly asks for the Queen's pardon.

Gen. Marakoff, of the Russian Army, is to be tried at St. Petersburg on a charge of high treason, the accusation being that he sold plans of new works at the fortress of Warsaw to France.

Mr. Tod Sloan announces that he will resume riding next year, but will confine his engagements to the United States. He says that the English Jockey Club has notified the American Club that it does not now object to the latter authorizing him to accept mounts.

In consequence of the demonstrations against the engagement of German artists at the music-halls in Budapest, the proprietors have been obliged to sign an undertaking to employ no more performers of German nationality under pain of being boycotted.

A draper's shop in West-st., Bognor, has been completely destroyed by fire, the loss, including stocks, seriously damaged. The shop belonged to Mrs. Goble, of Chichester, and the business was managed by her nephew and niece, Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey, who were awakened by the fire, and had a narrow escape. The damage is estimated at between £2,000 and £3,000.

For over half a century sexton and head at St. Mary's Church, Stoke Newington, Mr. D. B. Foster, was buried beneath the floor. The office of sexton has been in the Foster family from time well nigh immemorial. In the beginning of last century it was held by a woman—Mr. Foster's grandmother. He will be succeeded by his son.

Bacteria are so small, said Prof. Bottomley, M.A., F.R.S., lecturing at Belfast, that 25,000,000 of them can be placed on a single postage-stamp without overlapping. These organisms multiply by dividing, and given favourable conditions, one bacterium can multiply itself by 16,000 in an hour.

At this rate, declared the learned lecturer, at the end of three days this single bacterium would multiply to such an extent that it would take 40 goods trains, each with 40 wagons carrying tons of bacteria, to clear them away. The bacteria are dangerous to life numbered about 50, and the friendly ones about a thousand.

POSSUMS AT THE ZOO.

In the small cats' house at the Zoological Gardens there is a large unlabelled cage which contains an interesting group, composed of a female opossum and a litter of nine young ones. This society but seldom receives notice from the public, as the cage is never open in which the number of young has been so large, the highest figure up to now being six, although the maximum is put at sixteen. The mother violently resents any attempt to disturb her, giving vent to snarls and yelps at the approach of any intruder. This species is the largest of the opossums, which are now found only on the American continent, though in early times they were inhabitants of Europe, and even Britain, for fossil remains have been discovered not far from Lynton, in the New Forest.

In Europe 4,200 species of plants are gathered and used for commercial purposes. Of these 420 have a perfume that is pleasing, and enter largely into the manufacture of soaps and perfumes. There are more species of white flowers gathered than of any other colour—1,124 in all.

A HANGWOMAN.

